

MINUTES OF THE NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING

April 6, 2006
Lower Platte South NRD
Lincoln, Nebraska

Those in attendance were:

Garry Anderson, Chair
Jim Van Marter, Member
Wayne Madsen, Member
Roger Korell, Member
Myron Lembke, Member
Wayne Davis, Member
Richard Hadenfeldt, Member
Vince Kramper, Member
Beverly Donaldson, Member
Arlond Garratt, Member
Keith Rexroth, Member
Joe Hergott, Member
Richard Jiskra, Member
John Burkholder, Member
Doug Gahn
John Bender
Albert Traylor

David Clabaugh
Ken Berney
Glenn Johnson
Paul Zillig
Mike Onnen
Helen White
Mike Siedschlag
John Cambridge
John Engel
Ann Bleed, Staff
Rex Gittins, Staff
Jim Cook, Staff
Steve Gaul, Staff
Jill Richters, Staff
Karen Best, Staff
Jeremy Gehle, Staff
Tom Pesek, Staff

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair Garry Anderson in the conference room of the Lower Platte South NRD office in Lincoln, Nebraska, at approximately 9:35 a.m.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Notice of the meeting was published in the LINCOLN JOURNAL & STAR on March 29, 2006, notifying the public of the meeting.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL

The following items of informational material were distributed during the course of the meeting and a copy of each is attached to the file copy of the minutes:

1. Natural Resources Conservation Service Report.
2. Letter from Hal Simpson, Chairman of Western States Water Council to Governor Dave Heineman.
3. Nebraska Resources Development Fund Status Report.
4. Nebraska Resources Development Fund Quarterly Report.
5. Policy Statements V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII and XIII - Operations.
6. Letter from Ann Bleed to Helen White, Manager of Upper Loup NRD, on Mullen Dam Project.
7. Status of Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund.
8. Soil & Water Conservation Fund – Expenditures by Month, 1998-2006.
9. South Platte NRD Water Meter Program Status Report.
10. Natural Resources Water Quality Fund Status.
11. Water Well Decommissioning Fund Status.
12. Republican Basin EQIP & Platte – Republican CREP.
13. DNR Fund Expenditures for January & February, 2006.

MINUTES

Motion was made by Van Marter and seconded by Jiskra to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2006 Commission meeting as distributed. Motion carried.

Aye: Jiskra, Donaldson, Korell, Madsen, Kramper, Lembke, Rexroth, Garratt, Hadenfeldt, Van Marter, Burkholder, Hergott, Davis, and Anderson

Nay: None

Not Present: Johannes, Watermeier

EXPENDITURES

Tom Pesek noted that the expenditures report for the various funds for the months of January and February 2006 had been mailed to Commission members.

ADVISOR'S COMMENTS

Doug Gahn, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations, NRCS, commented on the strong demand for federal cost-share funds and NRCS's reduced funding for staff. The NRCS technical assistance budget this year is \$1,900,000 less than last year. It appears NRCS will have to reduce its full-time staff in Nebraska by 29 and will not be able to hire several current interns. Gahn is heading a committee that will look at the number of field offices in Nebraska and will submit a proposal in late 2006. He also commented briefly on the Conservation Security Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Wetlands Reserve Program, the 2006 National Resources Inventory, and the availability of Nebraska Soil Survey data on the web.

ACTING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ann Bleed introduced Rex Gittins who will replace Gayle Starr in a reorganized administrative division. Bleed noted that the South Platte NRD is making great strides regarding its responsibilities under LB 962. She commented on the CREP program noting that more acres have been made available for the Republican Basin and announced that Nebraska will host the national CREP conference this summer. She reported on the buy-out of Bostwick Irrigation District's allotment of water in Harlan County Reservoir this year and our department's negotiations with Frenchman Valley Irrigation District and Riverside Irrigation District. Bleed commended Jim Cook for his work on the Platte River Implementation Program. Cook commented that the process began in 1993 and the Final EIS has recently been printed. The Fish and Wildlife Service will complete its Biological Opinion in early May and Department of the Interior will submit its Record of Decision to Congress. The Secretary of the Interior will then act on it. Congressional action may take place in late 2006 or early 2007. Cook reported that Colorado and Wyoming are in favor of the program but Nebraska is undecided. Bleed also commented on a Western States Water Council meeting she attended and distributed a letter which clarified remarks she made at the meeting. Bleed also noted a rising issue is the rehabilitation of aging dams and infrastructure for irrigation.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

Vince Kramper reported that the Environmental Trust is now in its 13th year and has awarded grants totaling approximately \$90,000,000. There were 115 applications this year and 79 were funded with \$11,000,000. Of this, \$7,500,000 was for new grants and \$3,500,000 was for carry-over grants.

WATER POLICY TASK FORCE

Ann Bleed commented that the Instream Flow subcommittee has been working recently. The need for funding continues to be an issue.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Arlond Garratt reported that Kim Menke had briefed the Commission on Information Technology activities and Jeff Shafer had given them an overview of the 2006 Fully Appropriated Report that was prepared by the department regarding Nebraska's river basins. Steve Gaul had also reported on the status of various planning activities.

LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE

Keith Rexroth called on Ann Bleed who reported on a few legislative bills, primarily LB 933 and LB 1226. She also noted that the Natural Resources Commission would give final approval on applications to the Integrated Management Planning Fund and that rules and regulations would have to be prepared. Gittins commented that we are in the middle of the biennial budget and the appropriations for the coming year are not expected to change. He added it appears the cap on NRDF funds relating to the difference between allocated and obligated funds will be increased from \$13,500,00 to \$18,500,000.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Joe Hergott reported that Tom Pesek had reviewed the Nebraska Resources Development Fund Status Report and the Quarterly Report. Sponsors of the Antelope Creek, Stevens Creek Watershed, Leigh Dam, Little Sandy Creek Watershed, and Lower Turkey Creek Watershed projects had informed the Commission of projected funding needs and modifications regarding their projects.

Hergott reported that Ann Bleed's letter regarding the Mullen Dam Project Proposal had been reviewed, and that Helen White of the Upper Loup NRD and representatives of their consulting firm (HDR) had commented on some of the questions/comments contained in the letter and had requested a higher level of NRDF assistance. Following discussion, a motion was made by Hergott and seconded by Kramper that the Natural Resources Commission advise the Upper Loup NRD that it may proceed with an application and feasibility report for the Mullen Dam Project and that it is to address the comments and questions contained in the letter from the Acting Director of Natural Resources. Motion carried.

Aye: Donaldson, Korell, Madsen, Kramper, Lembke, Rexroth, Garratt, Hadenfeldt, Van Marter, Burkholder, Hergott, Davis, Anderson, and Jiskra

Nay: None

Not Present: Johannes, Watermeier

Hergott also reported that John Bender of the Department of Environmental Quality had briefed the Commission on a new policy statement it had developed entitled, "*Water Quality Management Plan for Recreation Reservoirs.*" Commission Policy Statements V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, and XII, as revised, had been reviewed at the November 17, 2005, Commission meeting. Motion was made by Hergott and seconded by Jiskra that the Natural Resources Commission approve Policy Statements V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, and XII. Motion carried.

Aye: Korell, Madsen, Kramper, Lembke, Rexroth, Garratt, Hadenfeldt, Van Marter, Burkholder, Hergott, Davis, Anderson, Jiskra, and Donaldson

Nay: None

Not Present: Johannes, Watermeier

Hergott noted that Tom Pesek had distributed and reviewed the status report for the Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund and Jill Richters had distributed and reviewed status reports for the Soil and Water Conservation Fund, the Natural Resources Quality Fund, and the Water Well Decommissioning Fund, the Republican Basin EQIP and the Platte-Republican CREP programs. Jeremy Gehle provided information on recent changes in acres allowed above Lake McConaughy.

Hergott also noted the Commission had an informative tour of streambank erosion and streambed degradation along the Little Nemaha River by Syracuse on Wednesday and expressed his appreciation to Dan Watermeier for hosting it.

NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Commission would be on May 24-25, 2006, at the Lower Platte South NRD, Lincoln, Nebraska. The annual assessment meeting for NRDF projects will take place on May 24th.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:40 a.m.

Chair

Director of Natural Resources

